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ABSTRACT

The Model communication skills lexicon, developed by the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) for use in communication skills instruction in kindergarten through sixth grade, consists of three word lists--an entry list, a general list, and a technical list. The Model 3 entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972)--based on a predominately white sample--was compared with the Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnie, and Nicholas (1971) lexicons--both based on black samples. Words unique to any lexicon were categorized and checked to see if any of them were important enough to require supplemental teaching. Most words present in one lexicon but lacking in the others could be easily accounted for by sampling error. Thus, it was concluded that the entry lexicon is probably adequate for use with black kindergarten children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. (Author/RB)

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A COMPARISON OF THE MOD 3 ENTRY LEXICON WITH TWO LEXICONS OF BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Pamela Terry

ABSTRACT

The entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972)--based on a predominately White sample--was compared with the Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnie, and Nicholas (1971) lexicons--both based upon Black samples. Words unique to any lexicon were categorized and checked to see if any of them were important enough to require supplemental teaching. Most words present in one lexicon but lacking from the others could be easily accounted for by sampling error. Thus, it was concluded that the entry lexicon is probably adequate for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

A COMPARISON OF THE MOD 3 ENTRY LEXICON WITH TWO LEXICONS OF BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

• Pamela Terry

PROBLEM

A mismatch between a child's spoken vocabulary and the written vocabulary he is expected to read in beginning reading material may add to the difficulty of learning to read. Rhode (1972) has compiled an entry lexicon of words representative of the words known by all children entering kindergarten. This entry lexicon will form the word base for all of SWRL's Mod 3 communication skills instruction. The purpose of the present comparative study was to obtain an overview of the adequacy of the entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972) for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Since the entry lexicon is presumed to be representative of the vocabularies of all kindergarten children, it would be important to discover any possible inadequacies for certain sub-groups of children as early as possible in order to allow for alternative or supplemental instructional routines or adaptations. Naturally, it would also be valuable to have corroboration of the entry lexicon's adequacy for disparate segments of the kindergarten population.

The approach used to obtain this information was a comparison of the entry lexicon with the only two lexicons known to be based upon the speech of Black kindergarten children--Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnle, and Nicholas (1971).

The following questions were of interest:

- 1) Do most of the words in the entry lexicon occur in the spoken vocabularies of Black kindergarten children? If not, are they

most likely missing due to sampling error or is there some more specific reason why they do not occur?

- 2) Do most of the words in the speaking vocabularies of Black kindergarten children occur in the entry lexicon? If not, are they most likely missing due to sampling error, or is there some more specific reason why they are not included in the entry lexicon?
- 3) Are the words that are unique to any lexicon important enough that they should be taught supplementally?

The purpose of this study, in other words, was to discover to what extent the entry lexicon intersects with the lexicons from two studies of Black kindergarten children's vocabulary. Interest centered on discrepancies among the lexicons and possible explanations for them.

LIMITATIONS.

It was realized at the outset that three independent lexicons would contain important methodological differences affecting their comparability. Limiting factors included variation in:

a) Sample-size and characteristics

The entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972) was based upon four sources: Kolson (1960)--primary source--, Murphy (1957), Weaver (1955), and Entwistle (1966).¹ All these sources were predominantly based on White youngsters from middle socio-economic backgrounds. The Legum et al. study, on the other hand, was all derived from Black children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Thomas study gathered information on both Black and White children from low

¹For additional information on the entry lexicon and its sources, refer to Cronnell (1969, 1971a, and 1971b).

socio-economic backgrounds, but only data from Black children were used for the present comparison.

Whereas the entry lexicon was based on four sources using a total of approximately 1,250 children, the Thomas lexicon was based on 50 children and the Legum et al. lexicon sampled 5 kindergarten children.

b) Number of total running words collected

There were extreme differences in the number of running words collected. The entry lexicon was based on nearly 1,500,000 running words compared to around 25,000 running words in the Thomas study and around 10,000 running words in the Legum et al. study.

c) Number of different words collected

The Thomas lexicon contained about twice as many different words as the Legum et al. lexicon, while the entry lexicon had seven times as many distinct words as the Legum et al. study. The separate lexicons also used different cut-off points for low frequency words..

d) Time spent gathering the speech samples

The Thomas study relied on data gathered in one 15 minute interview with each child. Three group interviews of 30-45 minutes each were recorded on consecutive days in the Legum et al. study. In addition, speech samples were collected in individual interviews with three children. The other two children in the Legum et al. study were interviewed as a pair. All of the data, thus, was gathered within one week's time. Sources for the entry

lexicon, however, collected speech samples over much longer time periods. Kolson gathered data under various home and classroom settings throughout the year. Both Murphy and Weaver collected words during regular class activities at several times during the school year.

e) Times of year the speech samples were collected

Holidays and seasonal events are more likely to be topics of conversation at certain times of the year than at others.

Both the Thomas and Legum et al. studies were limited to one particular time of the year whereas the entry lexicon sources covered several different seasons.

f) Recency of collection of the speech samples

A ten to fifteen year gap exists between the most recent data gathered (Legum et al., 1971) and some of the other sources, such as the oldest used in the entry lexicon (e.g., Weaver, 1955).

g) Geographic locations used

The Legum et al. study was limited to one classroom in the urban Los Angeles area. Thomas's data was collected in one school in Detroit and included several children born in the South. Data used in the entry lexicon, though, were collected in New England, rural Los Angeles County, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., and Portland, Oregon.

Because of these limiting factors, the lexicons were so disparate as to preclude any formal definitive statements concerning the previously stated questions. It was hoped, however, that in spite of these limitations, the information gathered would be useful in showing trends and in giving a

rough estimate of the adequacy of the entry lexicon, or, at the very least in providing enough information to decide whether there would be justification for an in-depth comparative study possibly involving the gathering of new and more comparable data on Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

METHOD

For the present study, the three lexicons--Thomas, Legum et al., and the entry lexicon--were checked against each other for common words. Lists were then compiled of all the words occurring in each Black lexicon (taken separately) that were not in the entry lexicon and vice versa. The size discrepancy between the entry lexicon and the other lexicons resulted in too many words to handle easily. Therefore, in order to make more meaningful comparisons, the words were categorized under such topics as food, animals, clothing, etc. Within each category, the lists were compared to see which words were:

- 1) common to all three lexicons,
- 2) common to any two lexicons,
- 3) only in one of the lexicons.

Possible explanations for a word's occurrence in either one, two, or all three of the lexicons were sought.

It was assumed that those words common to all three lexicons could quite safely be assumed to be well known by even very heterogeneous groups of kindergarten children. Such words could probably be used in books and other media and be understood with little difficulty. Words occurring in both the entry lexicon and either one of the Black lexicons would also seem to pose no differential problems for either Black or White

kindergarten children from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The most interesting words would be those that appeared either exclusively in the entry lexicon or exclusively in the Black lexicons. It would be among these words that any dialect words or words possibly unfamiliar to a large group of the kindergartners would appear.

RESULTS

Because of the previously mentioned inequalities in the lexicons, it was difficult to make any emphatic statements of the results. For example, it was impossible to state that a word present in the entry lexicon but not occurring in a Black lexicon was truly not in the Black children's vocabularies. It could easily have been in their vocabularies, but not elicited from the particular group of students engaged in particular topics of conversation at that particular time. However, such words were scrutinized for possible hypotheses about why or why not the word might be common to one group but not another.

Because words in songs, poems, titles, rhymes, and common sayings (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance) are not necessarily in a child's normal speaking vocabulary, such words, if identified, were regarded with less significance.

Children's use of possibly racially meaningful terms was interpreted cautiously, and no immediate significance was attributed to such words. Since all of the Legum et al. data were available, including the transcript of the children's discussions, terms found in Legum et al. but not in the entry lexicon were carefully checked against their original

usage in the conversational context. Explanations for some of the more questionable terms turned out to be as follows:

watt - typographical error for "wait"

whitey - found in "Mary had a little lamb,...fleece was whitey snow..."

eenie
meenie
minee
moe } used in counting rhyme: eenie, meenie, minee, moe, catch a tiger by the toe...

fasto - child's mispronunciation of fatso

mes - child wanted his turn saying "let mes finish mine."

hopple - sung in Jingle Bells: "...in a hopple, slopple sleigh."

jockle - pronunciation of a word misheard. Child 1 said, "a doctor."
Child 2 asked, "A jockle?" Word was clarified, "No, a doctor..."

tapers - a word made up to refer to the tape recording equipment

twinkle - in song "twinkle, twinkle, little star"

holy
calm } in song "Silent night, holy night, all is calm..."

hoe - in a poem, "I traded for a hoe, the hoe wouldn't chop..."

letters O, J - appeared in the name of O.J. Simpson

Jungleland - local amusement area in Los Angeles

tippy
toeing } "I'm tippy-toeing."

The words seen above are not dialect words nor important words to the Black children themselves. The only word that might perhaps be considered a dialect usage is the use of fitting to mean "starting to." The word in context was "I was fitting to say something." There is little or no need for supplemental teaching of these words to other students in the classroom.

In comparing the Black and White lexicons within categories, some interesting trends may be seen even though there do not appear to be any major gaps of knowledge between the lexicons. For example, in order to

better see trends, the food category was further subdivided into starches, fruits, sweets, meats, and vegetables.

It was interesting that the entry lexicon included many fruits not found in the Black lexicons. The Thomas lexicon (Black) had only one fruit--a raisin--that was not also in the entry lexicon. On the other hand, the Thomas lexicon had several references to starches not in the other lexicons, including such things as grits and corn bread, while the larger entry lexicon contained only four references to starches not found in the other lexicons (although they were quite fancy starches such as pretzels and waffles). In the category of sweets, the entry lexicon listed almost fifteen references to dessert-like words whereas the Thomas only listed one not in the other lexicons--gingerbread. In the vegetable category, the only word unique to the Thomas lexicon was spinach. The entry lexicon alone listed such relishes as olive, pickle, radish, and celery, hardly staples. This may say something about differences in the diets of the Black children from low-income backgrounds vs. White children from middle-income backgrounds. A major factor affecting the diet would seem to be the economic difference which was confounded with the Black-White variable. However, rather than just economic differences, there also seem to be geographical distinctions showing up here. Many of the foods unique to the Black lexicons are "Southern cooking." Grits, for example, are common among both Blacks and Whites in the South, but rarely heard of in other regions of the country. The entry lexicon is known to be underrepresentative of the South and would therefore not be likely to include typical Southern foods.

The clothing category hints at a tendency for the entry lexicon to contain more specific words than the other lexicons. The more common words seem to be included in both a White and a Black lexicon or all three of the

lexicons. This greater specificity

to its larger sample size, however, also

greater the possibility of including

words as well as high frequency

and the entry lexicon, the more specific

frequency is only in the entry lexicon

are specific names of materials, etc.

These also happen to be the most common

In the entry lexicon, the more specific

entry, given that the more specific

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Color words mentioned only in the entry lexicon tend to be lower frequency words (with the exception of yellow). Purple, tan, and violet are certainly less frequently used colors than white, black, green, or red, which are common to both Black and White lexicons. There do not appear to be any meaningful differences between the three lexicons for this category.

Other categories looked at included: sicknesses and diseases; emotions and feelings; money; tools and small appliances; and musical terms. These categories showed the same patterns of words being present or lacking from specific lexicons due to sampling errors or sample size discrepancies and added no new information.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the entry lexicon contains many more words than either the Thomas or Legum et al. lexicon. Since most of the words in the Legum et al. and Thomas lexicons are included in the entry lexicon, it seems to rather adequately cover those terms most often used by Black children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Those words unique to the Black lexicons do not seem to be dialect words, but rather are words that can be explained as:

- 1) localisms - terms common in a particular geographic location
e.g., Jungleland (Los Angeles area).
- 2) words in songs, stories, rhymes, etc.--allegiance from "Pledge of Allegiance."
- 3) nonsense words made up by the children to substitute for unknown words, e.g., "hopple, slopple sleigh" in "Jingle Bells."
- 4) informal slang terms that did not occur in more formal interview situations. For example, expressions such as snotty, fatty, fatso, etc. occurred in the casual group discussions in the Legum et al. study.

The question of whether Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds lack some of the words in the entry lexicon cannot be answered definitely. There was a large enough size differential between the samples to account for the fairly large numbers of entry lexicon words that failed to appear in the Black lexicons. Also, the tendency for those words unique to the entry lexicon to be lower frequency words, than those common to the different lexicons also implicates sample size as a major determinant of whether words are included in a lexicon. The likelihood of lower frequency words occurring spontaneously in conversation certainly increases as the sample size increases. Larger, more comparable samples of Black kindergarten children's speech would probably have included many of the words found only in the entry lexicon.

Although there still exists the possibility that not all Black kindergarten children know all the words in the entry lexicon, the magnitude of the problem does not seem to justify a full-scale investigation requiring the gathering of a new, enlarged Black lexicon. To determine which words, if any, are truly unknown by many Black kindergarten children, a follow-up study could easily be done. One could present some of the more important words found only in the entry lexicon to a sample of Black kindergarten children--perhaps via a picture identification task--and thereby pinpoint particularly difficult words that might require supplemental teaching.

The evidence presently available, however, does not seem strong enough to suggest that there are significant differences between the lexicons. Those differences noticed seem adequately explainable by the variation in the samples. Therefore, in spite of the possibility that some of the words may be new to Black kindergarten children, the entry lexicon, based on a predominantly White sample, does seem adequate for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

APPENDIX A: WORDS LISTED BY CATEGORY

ANIMALS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

cat
dog
horse
lamb
puppy
snake
turkey

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

bear
bunny
chicken
cow
donkey
duck
fox
monkey
mouse
pig
rabbit
turtle
wolf

Entry & Legum

elephant
frog
hen
sheep
tiger

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

alligator
ant
bee
billy goat
bird
birdie
butterfly
caterpillar
chick
collie
crab
crocodile

Thomas

colt
goose
hound
salmon
weasel

Legum

shark

III: Words in Only One Lexicon (continued)

Entry

deer
eagle
Easter bunny
giraffe
goat
goldfish
gorilla
grasshopper
kangaroo
kitten
kitty
kitty cat
lion
mice
owl
• parrot
pigeon
pony
pussy
rat
reindeer
rooster
seal
shrimp
skunk
spider
squirrel
steer
tadpole
trout
whale

ARTICLES OF CLOTHING

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

clothes
dress
shoe
sock

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

apron
blouse
cap
coat
glove
hat
holster
hose
pants
shirt
suit
sweater

Entry & Legum

belt
pajamas
purse
ribbon
tie

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

cloth
collar
dungarees
gown
helmet
hood
jacket
jeans
mask
mitten
outfit
petticoat
raincoat
rubbers
sandal
scarf
skirt
slip
slipper

Thomas

panties
undershirt

Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon (continued)

Entry

smock
stocking
veil
wrap
zipper

material

cotton
fur
knit
lace
leather
nylon
silk
wool

COLORS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

black
brown
green
white

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

blue
gold
gray

Entry & Legum

orange
red

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

pink
purple
silver
tan
violet
yellow

Thomas

none

Legum

none

FOOD

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

cake
candy
fish
lamb
orange
pancake
potato
turkey
water

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

apple
bacon
banana
bread.
bubble gum
bun
cabbage
carrot
cereal
chicken
chip
cigarette
coffee
cookie
corn
cornflake
cream
cupcake
donut (doughnut)
duck
egg
fruit
grape
gravy
ham
hamburger.
ice cream
jello
milk
meat
oatmeal
pea
peach
peanut

Entry & Legum

bean
beer
honey
pumpkin

Thomas & Legum

none

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons (continued)

Entry & Thomas

pepper
pie
pineapple
popcorn
popsicle
potato chips
roast
salad
salt
sandwich
soup
sucker
sugar
spaghetti
tea
toast
vegetable

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

applesauce
brownie
celery
cherry
cocoa
coconut
cone
crab
cracker
cranberry
date
frosting
jam
juice
lemonade
lifesaver
lollipop
marshmallow
nut
oat
olive
pear
pickle
pretzel
pudding
punch

Thomas

biscuit
bologna
bread stick
catsup
corn bread
gingerbread
goose
grits
lard
liver
muffin
pork
porridge
rice
raisin
salmon
sausage
spice
spinach
whiskey

Legum

pizza

III. Words in Only One Lexicon (continued).

Entry

radish
sauce
shrimp
soda
strawberry
vanilla
waffle
walnut

Subdivisions of the Food Category

Starches

Entry only

cracker
oat
pretzel
waffle

Thomas only

biscuit
bread stick
corn bread
grits
muffin
porridge
rice

Legum only

pizza

Common to all three

cake
pancake

Fruits

Entry only

applesauce
cherry
cranberry
date
pear
strawberry
lemonade
juice

Thomas only

raisin

Legum only

none

Common to all three

orange
watermelon

Sweets

Entry only

brownie
coconut
cone
frosting
jam
marshmallow
nuts
pudding

Thomas only

gingerbread

Legum only

none

Common to all three

cake
candy

Sweets (continued)

Entry only

punch
sauce
soda
strawberry
vanilla
walnut

Meats

Entry only

crab
shrimp

Thomas only

bologna
goose
liver
pork
salmon

Legum only

none

Common to all three

fish
lamb
turkey

Vegetables

Entry only

celery
olive
pickle
radish

Thomas only

spinach

Legum only

none

Common to all three

potato

HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

bed
chair
stove
table

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

closet
couch
curtain
dish
furniture
iron
lamp
light
lock
mop
pillow
radio
rug
pot
toilet

Entry & Legum

d~~aw~~er
oven

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

cot
crib
desk
dresser
elevator
furnace
lantern
mattress
mirror
pan
pitcher
phone
phonograph
tablecloth
toaster
vacuum

Thomas

barbeque
figerator [sic]

Legum

none

PARTS OF THE BODY.

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

back
eye
face
feet
hair
hand
head
leg
nose
side
teeth

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

bottom
chin
ear
fist
heel
neck
stomach

Entry & Legum

finger
foot
mouth
toe
(voice)

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

beard
chest
heart
knee
skeleton
skin
shoulder
throat
thumb
tongue
tooth
whisker

Thomas

liver
muscle

Legum

none

PROFESSIONS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

doctor
policeman
teacher

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

cowboy
fireman
nurse
police
sailor

Entry & Legum

leader

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

bomber
carpenter
conductor
dancer
dentist
driver
engineer
farmer
guard
janitor
mailman
milkman
outlaw
president
sheriff
shepherd
soldier

Thomas

baker
busman
iceman
sailor man
woodcutter
wrestler

Legum

none

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

bicycle
bike
car

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas

airplane
machine
train
truck
wagon

Entry & Legum

sleigh

Thomas & Legum

none

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry

ambulance
auto
automobile
caboose
cruiser
elevator
helicopter
motor
motorboat
plane
rocket
sailboat
ship
sled
snowplow
spaceship
stagecoach
station wagon
streetcar
tractor
trailer
tricycle
tug

Thomas

express
fire truck
racer

Legum

none

APPENDIX B

WORDS USED BY BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN THE LEGUM ET AL. STUDY (1971),
BUT NOT FOUND IN THE ENTRY LEXICON (RHODE, 1972)

blame	minee
bo	moe
boo	nasty
boss	nope
breath,	ought
calm	pizza
classroom	raggedy
daddy'o	riddle
dumb	shark
eenie	silent
everytime (2 words in	sneak
fasto Entry Lexicon)	snotty
fatso	spit
fatty	stomp
fitting	stoop
flu	stuffy
grease	tapers
hassle	that's
hoe	tickle
holy	tippy
hopple	toeing
hush	trade
jockle	trash
jungleland	twinkle
married	wag
marry	wham
mash	whip
meenie,	whitey
mes	

APPENDIX C

WORDS IN THE THOMAS LEXICON BUT NOT FOUND IN THE ENTRY LEXICON (RHODE, 1972)

abc's
age
airport
alley
any time
argue
auntie
baker
bald
barbeque
base
battle
beaten
biscuits
bob
bologna
boo
boss
boyfriend
bread stick
bury
busman
catsup
'cause
citizen
clasp
colt
comic
corn bread
crystal
den
department
detention
devil
dodge
donut
doze
drunk
'em
express
felt
fetch
fiddle
figerator [sic]
fire truck
flake
folk(s)

forty
funnel
gamble
generator
giddy
gingerbread
goose
granddaddy
grease
grits
guitar
hmm
hound
hymn
iceman
jaywalk
kick ball
lard
liver
load
loaf
lone
ma'am
map
marry
mash
mass
midnight
muscle
nigh
nor
nowhere
ought
paddle
pale
panties
pitch
pork
porridge
preach
price
princess
project
puff
racer
raisin
range

refrigerator
rice
robber
rock-a-bye-baby
rocking chair
sailor man
salmon
sausage
scald
score
scotch
scrape
seek
shooter
sickle
smother
sneak
south
speech
spice
spinach
spray
stain
stomp
stoop
studio couch
that's
trash
uh
uh huh
uh hmm
um
undershirt
vocal
wallpaper
weasel
weld
whip
whiskey
whoever
winner
woodcutter
worth
wrestler
wrinkle
yer [sic]

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